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SCIENCE

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INVENTIONS AND PATENTS

THE status of the inventor within the government service, of his invention and the administration and utilization of the same, presents a problem that has been growing increasingly acute during the last decade.

The pressing need for some one government agency to undertake, under a unified, comprehensive system, the administration and industrial development of patentable inventions and patents originating in the government bureaus was formulated by Dr. F. G. Cottrell, of the Bureau of Mines, in a paper, entitled "Government Owned Patents," presented to the American Mining Congress, in November, 1916.

Dr. Cottrell was brought to the full realization of the highly unsatisfactory situation of the government inventor through his experience with some patents of his own. It was his desire to make the public the sole beneficiary of these, but for reasons which will appear below, there was no practicable way of accomplishing this. Donation to the government was not feasible because there was no government official or agency authorized by law to accept assignment of patents; so he finally conceived and brought into existence a non-dividend paying corporation,¹ and to this assigned his patents for administration and license. A fundamental stipulation in its certificate of incorporation was that the profits, over and above actual running expenses, should be used for the advancement of research, and thus a public double benefit was effected.

This new departure in economics has been in successful operation for several years and the achievement has pointed the way for and has justified the attempt to try out an experiment along similar lines in the government service; and this has culminated in a bill

¹ Research Corporation, New York.